

**MINUTES OF THE 534<sup>TH</sup> MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING OF WILLIAMSBURGH HOUSING ASSOCIATION, HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 30<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER AT 6.00PM AT RALSTON HOUSE AND OVER TEAMS.**

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**PRESENT:**

J. Scott

Vice Chairperson

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M. Symons

C. Henry

D. Eadie

T. Thomson

E. McDermott

A. Ballantine

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

J. Grant

Chief Executive Officer

L. Ramsay

Head of Finance & Corporate Services

L. Reynolds

Head of Property Services

G. Scott

Head of Development

L. Ferrie

Head of Housing Services

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**1. (a) Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr. M. McLaren and J. Kerr (Committee members).

**(b) Declarations of Interest**

J. Scott and A. Ballantine noted an interest in Item 6, CEO report, relating to the review of Williamsburgh Property Services (W.P.S.).

**2. (a) Minutes of Management Committee Meeting: 26.10.22 (No.533)**

The minutes of the Management Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> October 2022 (No.533) were proposed correct, on a motion proposed by M. Symons, seconded by E. McDermott.

**(b) Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **3. Election of Chairperson**

J. Grant outlined the requirements regarding electing a new Chairperson. This included reference to the role profile, the plans for the Association, skills and knowledge considerations and the new Management Committee Succession Plan.

Following a discussion amongst members, J. Scott (Vice Chair) was elected as Chairperson, proposed by [REDACTED], seconded by T. Thomson.

Two members sought election to the Vice Chair role (D. Eadie and [REDACTED]). Following discussion amongst members, D. Eadie was elected as the Vice Chair, proposed by M. Symons, seconded by T. Thomson.

One member sought election to the vacant Convenor of the Finance, Audit and Corporate Services Sub Committee. Following discussion, M. Symons was elected as the Convenor of the Finance, Audit and Corporate Services Sub Committee, proposed by T. Thomson, seconded by A. Ballantine.

### **4. Rent Review 2023-24**

L. Ramsay presented the report, covering the overall challenging context of the economic outlook, pressures on the business plan, potential capping of rents by the Scottish Government and the focus on rent affordability for tenants. The impacts of the rent increase options were explained, noting pressures on capital investment and future plans for new build. Further information was provided on the new enhanced tenant consultation process, offering a choice of three rent increase options and utilising a digital consultation approach alongside traditional printed material.

A member commented that the report was clear and gave a comprehensive overview of the relevant elements to consider. It was important that the Association continued to invest in homes as the long-term quality of homes was at risk if rents were set too low.

A member welcomed the consultation process providing three options and noted the context for working tenants was particularly challenging. The current rents were comparatively lower than many others and this was a positive position to be in from an affordability perspective.

A member asked about the potential impacts on the future new build programmes and why costs were rising so rapidly. G. Scott advised that construction costs were rising sharply from inflationary pressures. The tender prices are expected for Cartha Crescent in early January with further discussion on available subsidy to quickly follow. J. Grant advised that an update will be provided at the January Management Committee meeting on both Cartha Crescent and the potential implications for a future new build programme.

#### **4. Rent Review 2023-24 Contd.**

A member supported the new consultation approach and asked for information to be included on the impacts of each choice. L. Ferrie advised that the consultation will include reference to the investment programme impacts of each choice.

A member welcomed the clarity and pragmatism of the report and the options provided were clear. While some aspects are being developed, notably the approach to net-zero investment, it was important that rents and costs were routinely reviewed. J. Grant advised that the asset management strategy will be a key element in finalising the strategic approach to investment and consequently the financial impacts. This will be awarded in December, with several technical consultants expected to provide bids.

The recommendation was approved, proposed by M. Symons, seconded by C. Henry.

#### **5. Policy Review Programme: Procurement**

G. Scott presented the report, outlining the importance of the procurement policy in providing assurance of legal compliance and delivering good value for money. Key changes to the policy were highlighted, including an increase in thresholds when direct award is permitted.

A member asked if the increased thresholds were high enough, given the rapid inflationary price rises. L Reynolds advised that these had been set following benchmarking with other RSLs.

A member noted that control was important so keeping levels lower helped to manage risk.

A member asked that the thresholds be kept under review. L Reynolds advised this would be the case.

The policy was approved, proposed by T. Thomson, seconded by D. Eadie.

## **6. Chief Executive's Report**

J. Grant presented the report, highlighting updates on the review of the Social Housing Charter, office accommodation, decisions reached at the Sub Committee meetings and the 2023/24 EVH pay award negotiations.

He also advised on the new membership application received. This was approved, proposed by C. Henry, seconded by T. Thomson.

L. Ramsay presented the updated ICT Cloud Project, noting good progress and costs now received to enable further progress.

Several members noted support for the Cloud-hosting, noting additional business resilience, cyber-security benefits and welcomed the progress being made.

The project was approved, proposed by T. Thomson, seconded by E. McDermott.

L. Ramsay updated on progress with the proposed transfer of W.P.S. into W.H.A., highlighting independent Tax/VAT advice now received and noting no obvious barriers identified to the proposed transfer. The next stage was outlined, seeking due-diligence legal review and discussions with regulators.

A member welcomed the use of external advice to provide an independent assessment and noted the extra assurance that this approach provided. Moving to the next stage was approved, proposed by J. Scott, seconded by M. Symons.

J. Grant presented the amended FLAIR constitution, noting only very minor changes to the previous version. This was approved, proposed by T. Thomson, seconded by C. Henry.

## **7. Procurement of Repairs Service**

L. Reynolds presented the report, highlighting the progress made on developing the procurement approach to secure a new reactive repairs contractor. The preferred option is to join a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) managed by Procurement for Housing (PfH). This would be a joint framework for use solely by the FLAIR member/associate member Associations. External legal advice has been received noting that the approach is in line with procurement regulations. Costs will be increased because of additional administration and framework management fees. However, the benefits of resilience, reduced risk of contractor failure and service disruption by using several contractors (rather than appointing a single multi-trade contractor) were considered to be a priority. It would also support the local economy and potentially create local jobs.

## **7. Procurement of Repairs Service Contd.**

A member asked for the benefits to be clarified and why a new framework was required when others were already in place. L. Reynolds advised that greater security of service provision was the main benefit and the new framework allowed for ring-fencing of contractors for FLAIR Associations' use only.

A member agreed the contractor market was shrinking, with reduced options available and this was the better option from what remained. It was also good to put something back into the local economy.

L. Reynolds further outlined the proposed procurement schedules for major repairs and cyclical maintenance for 2023/24.

The recommendations were approved, proposed by M. Symons, seconded by D. Eadie.

## **8. Management Committee Succession Policy and Plan**

J. Grant presented the report, noting the change made to the policy, following feedback received at the October meeting.

The policy and plan were approved, proposed by J. Scott, seconded by C. Green.

## **9. Strategic Risk Management Q2**

L. Ramsay presented the report, highlighting the status of the strategic risks and progress with mitigation actions. Three new risks were added, with one being removed.

The Committee noted the report.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Update**

L. Ferrie presented the report, highlighting progress made against the protected characteristics data collection objective and the next steps. While the data generally aligned with expectations, the high incidence of reported mental health issues amongst all groups from whom data was collected, was unexpected.

A member noted that it was good to see this data and showed the importance of collecting it.

A member thanked staff for all the work completed so far, noting it was a good start and gives some direction to further developing our services.

**10. Equalities and Human Rights Update Contd.**

The Committee noted the report.

**11. Any Other Business**

- (a) J. Grant noted that a member had asked that consideration be given to changing the current practice of proposing and seconding to confirm acceptance of a recommendation, to a consensus approval. Following a discussion concerning the relative pros and cons of the current approach, it was agreed that the Standing Orders would be examined to confirm that a change to a consensus approach was permitted.
- (b) J. Grant highlighted the status and planned activity relating to dealing with dampness related mould within the housing stock. He noted the stock survey which was now complete and had not identified any issues, along with a proactive information supply to tenants on managing condensation dampness. Given the risk of increased mould in under-heated homes because of the cost of energy, additional focus in tenant communication and property inspections of any reported mould would be delivered. W.H.A. would not permit tenants to remain in a property with chronic dampness-related mould in any event, with a decant or permanent move being provided if the problem could not be resolved quickly.

**12. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

J. Scott thanked everyone for their attendance and advised that the next scheduled meeting of Williamsburgh Housing Association's Management Committee would be held on **Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at 6pm.**

**CHAIRPERSON:** .....

**DATE:** .....